

In the interests of efficiency, I have decided to distill every argument I have ever had with your average statist, so that I can hand it out to those who argue that government is voluntary, if I don't like it I can leave, taxation is not violence, etc.

I thought this might also be of use to you, because life is short.

Me: Tell me, do you think that violence is wrong?

Statist: Yes, violence is wrong ' except in self-defense.

Me: Agreed, except in self-defense. So tell me, how do you think that problems should be solved, if we should not use violence?

Statist: Well, I think that people should become more active in government, and that governments should do ABC, X, Y and Z.

Me: But how do you reconcile your objection to violence with your support of government programs, since government programs are paid for through taxation, which is coercive?

Statist: Huh? What are you talking about? Taxation is not coercive.

Me: Taxation is coercive, since if you do not pay your taxes, you are kidnapped at gunpoint and thrown in jail ' where if you try to escape, you are shot.

Statist: But this is a democracy, where we choose our own governments.

Me: Being offered a choice between two violent alternatives is not the same as being free to choose. If a store owner gets to choose which Mafia gang he pays 'protection' money to, can it be really argued that he is making a 'free' choice? If a woman can choose between two potential husbands ' but will be forced to marry one of them ' can she said to be really 'choosing' marriage? People can only freely choose governments, if they have the choice *not* to choose governments.

Statist: Well there is a 'social contract,' that binds people to their governments.

Me: There is no such thing as a 'social contract.' Unless they have been granted power of attorney, people cannot justly sign contracts on behalf of others. If one man has the power to unilaterally impose his will on another and call it a 'contract,' then logically a man can steal from a woman and call it 'charity.'

Statist: But I accept the social contract ' and so do you if you drive on the roads.

Me: First of all, your choice to honour a contract does not give you the right to force me to honour it. You can choose to buy a house, but you cannot justly force me to pay for it. If you forge my signature, I am not bound to honour the contract ' and I have never agreed to a 'social contract' of any kind. Secondly, it is true that I use government services, but that is irrelevant to the central moral question of coercion. If a slave accepts a meal from his master, is he condoning slavery?

Statist: I suppose not. But still, you implicitly accept the social contract by continuing to live in a country, as

Socrates argued.

Me: Can I justly create a 'social contract' that allows me to rob anyone who lives in my neighborhood ' and say that if people continue to live in 'my' neighborhood, they are expressly consenting to my new social contract?

Statist: Well, no, but we are talking about *governments*, not individuals

Me: Is the government not composed of individuals? Is 'the government' not just a label for a group of individuals who claim the moral right to initiate force against others ' a right they define as evil for those they use violence against? If you take away all the individuals who compose 'the government,' do you still have a government?

Statist: I suppose not. But that is beside the point ' you say that taxation is coercive, but I have paid taxes my entire life, and I have never had a gun pointed at my head.

Me: Sure, and a prisoner is not shot if he does not try to escape. If a slave conforms to his master's wishes because of the threat of violence, the situation is utterly immoral. Does the Mafia have to actually burn your shop down for the threat to be violent?

Statist: No ' however, I do not accept the premise that the government uses force to extract taxation from citizens.

Me: All right - is there anything that the government does that you disagree with? Do you agree, for instance, with the invasion of Iraq ? *[Keep asking until you find some program the statist finds abhorrent.]*

Statist: Now, I think that the invasion of Iraq was morally wrong.

Me: Why?

Statist: Because Iraq had done nothing to threaten the US .

Me: Right, so it is an *initiation* of force, not self-defense. Now ' you do realize that the war in Iraq is only possible because you pay your taxes.

Statist: To some degree, of course.

Me: If the war in Iraq is morally wrong, but it is only possible because you pay your taxes ' and your taxes are *not* extracted from you through force ' then you are *voluntarily funding and enabling that which you call evil*. Can you explain that to me?

Statist: I pay my taxes because I'm a citizen of this country. If I disagree with the war, then I should run for office and try to stop it.

Me: All right, if you were against child abuse, would you *voluntarily* fund a group dedicated to abusing children?

Statist: Of course not!

Me: And if you *did* claim to be against child abuse, and you voluntarily funded a group dedicated to

abusing children, and I said that you should stop doing that, and you replied that you would not ' but that if someone *did* oppose this abusive group, they should try to infiltrate this group, take control of it, and somehow stop it from abusing children, would that make any sense at all?

Statist: I guess not.

Me: If you were against the war in Iraq , but volunteered for it ' and agreed to fight without a salary, and spent your own money to cover all your expenses, do you understand that your position would be utterly incomprehensible? You would claim to be against something ' and then expend enormous amounts of time, effort, money and resources *supporting* it?

Statist: Yes, that would make little sense.

Me: Thus do you see that your position that the war in Iraq is a moral evil, but that you are *voluntarily* funding it through your taxes, makes no sense at all? If the war in Iraq *is* a moral evil, but is only enabled through your voluntary funding, then continuing to fund it is to openly admit that it is *not* a moral evil. If you *are* forced to fund the war in Iraq , you can maintain that it is a moral evil, because it is the initiation of the use of force. However, the taxation that is *also* the initiation of the use of force against you must *also* be a moral evil, because you are forced to fund the initiation of force against others. Thus either taxation *is* coercion, or you are the worst form of moral hypocrite, *by voluntarily supporting that which you call evil*. Does that make sense?

Statist: I can certainly see that position.

Me: Can you find any logical flaws in my position?

Statist: No, but I still think that you are wrong.

Me: Well, I'm certainly glad that you are reading this article, rather than debating me directly, because as I said at the beginning, life is far too short to waste time arguing with fools.

[Stefan Molyneux](#) is the host of [Freedomain Radio](#), the most popular philosophical podcast on the Internet, and a Top 10 Finalist in the [2007 Podcast Awards](#). He is the author of [Universally Preferable Behavior: A Rational Proof of Secular Ethics](#), [On Truth: The Tyranny of Illusion](#), and the novel [The God of Atheists](#).